

A NARRATIVE  
OF THE  
PROCEEDINGS  
AT THE  
GENERAL MEETING  
OF THE  
London Corresponding Society,  
HELD  
ON MONDAY, JULY 31, 1797,  
IN A FIELD,  
NEAR THE VETERINARY COLLEGE, ST. PANCRAS,  
IN THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX.

---

CITIZEN *THOMAS STUCKER*, PRESIDENT.

---

London :

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY;

AND PUBLISHED BY SYMONDS, NO. 20, PATERNOSTER-ROW;  
J. S. JORDAN, FLEET-STREET; EVANS AND BONE, NO. 120,  
HOLBORN-HILL: AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1797.

---

PRICE 4d.

B. 2027.97.530\*

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
DEPOSITED BY THE LIBRARY OF THE  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

OCT 21 1939

---

A

## NARRATIVE, &c.

---

**T**HE London Corresponding Society having determined to call a General Meeting of its Members, and other Friends, to Parliamentary Reform, on the 31st of July last; a requisition was accordingly prepared, which, after having undergone a legal investigation, was regularly advertised in the Courier of the 22d, and Sunday Review of the 23d past; and posting bills were distributed, and the preparations for holding the same went on regularly, when on the Saturday preceding the meeting, an advertisement appeared from the magistrates of Bow-street, stating that the meeting would be illegal, and calling on all constables, &c. to attend the same. The Executive Committee met in the evening, and immediately deputed Citizen SAMUEL WEBBE, one of their members, with a person who signed the requisition, to the magistrates of Bow-street, with the following letter :

*" Committee Room, July 29, 1797.*

" GENTLEMEN,

" THE Executive Committee of the  
" London Corresponding Society, in consequence of an advertise-  
" ment from the Public Office, Bow-street, has deputed S. WEBBE  
" to learn wherein the requisition of the said Society, for calling a  
" general meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup> is illegal. If the magistrate or  
" magistrates



" magistrates will point out wherein the illegality consists, the  
 " London Corresponding Society will pledge itself not to touch  
 " on any such points.

" *Signed by order of the Committee,*

" ALEX. GALLOWAY, *President.*

" RICHD. BARROW,

" JAMES POWELL,

" SAML. WEBBE,

" THOS. EVANS, *Secretary.*"

The deputation was immediately introduced to Mr. FORD, the sitting magistrate, who received them with great civility; he informed them " that there had been a meeting of the magistrates, at which he was present; that they had agreed that no meeting under the requisition advertised could be legal, but did not feel themselves at all bound to explain particularly wherein it was not. The Deputation represented that the Committee did not presume they were so bound, but asked the information only as a matter of courtesy. The magistrates, however, did not think proper to comply with the request, but observed that they (the magistrates) and the society were at issue, and on the day of the meeting it would be seen whether or no it was legal."

The Committee being convinced of the legality of their requisition, did not feel themselves justified in postponing the meeting. They, in consequence, ordered the following answer to the Bow-street advertisement to be immediately printed and posted at all parts of the town.

#### LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY.

" THIS Committee having read an advertisement, inserted in  
 " the Public Newspapers by the Magistrates of the Public Office,  
 " Bow-street; but being convinced that the original requisition  
 " of the householders, Members of the London Corresponding  
 " Society, calling the meeting, IS STRICTLY CONFORM-  
 " ABLE TO LAW, AND TO ALL THE PROVISI-  
 " ONS of the ACT 36 GEORGE III. The said Meeting  
 " of this Society, and others, Friends of Reform, will take place  
 " as advertised, on Monday, the 31st of July, in a field, near  
 " the VETERINARY COLLEGE, ST. PANCRAS.

" *Signed in name, and by order of the*

" *Executive Committee of the Lon-*

" *don Corresponding Society,*

" ALEX. GALLOWAY, *President.*

" THOS. EVANS, *Secretary.*

" July 29th, 1796."



The extreme length of the Address to the Nation, and the variety of subjects it embraced, induced the Committee rather to refer it to the Society in their Divisions, than to offer it to a Public Meeting.

The Committee met early on Monday morning, at a house in Sommers Town, arranged the business, and determined to begin the proceedings exactly at the time appointed, though surrounded by magistrates and soldiers. About twenty minutes before two, word was brought that the magistrates and soldiers were in the field, the Committee immediately proceeded to the spot, and ascended the tribunes. Citizens Ferguson, Galloway, Webbe, and Stuckey, were in the first tribune: Maxwell, Baxter, Barrow, and Evans, (Secretary to the Society) in the second: Hodgson, B. Binns, and Rhynd, in the third. Citizen Powell, a member of the Executive Committee, with six persons to assist him, were placed at the feet of the tribunes, to take minutes of all that passed. Each tribune was immediately surrounded by an immense body of constables. Sir William Addington, Mr. Flood, &c. on horseback, came and remained within a few feet of the first; Messrs. Colquhoun, Williams, &c. on foot, at the second; Messrs. Conant, &c. also on foot, at the third. There were, according to the best authority, upwards of 2000 constables, and as many soldiers in and about the field, and betwixt 6 and 8000 more within a short distance of the spot.

Exactly at two o'clock, the watches having been previously set alike, a white handkerchief being raised at the first tribune, which was immediately answered from the other two, the business commenced. Citizen Galloway opened the proceedings at the first tribune (Citz. Ferguson having previously asked Sir Wm. Addington, whether the proclamation had been read, or whether he had been interrupted? to both which questions he answered No. The above questions were repeated, and the same answer received several times during the proceedings.) he began reading the requisition, pursuant to which the meeting was convened, which being concluded, Citizen Ferguson said to Sir Wm. Addington, "Have you any objection to that?"

Sir Wm. Addington. "No."

Galloway. "Is there any thing illegal or improper contained in it?"

Sir Wm. Addington. "NO."

He then proceeded to read the advertisement from the Public Office, Bow-street, stated the proceedings of the Committee on that head, read the letter sent to the magistrates, and said, "that no specific answer had been received." He observed,

served, that he could not perceive in what respect the requisition of the society was informal, or how the meeting could be deemed illegal; but that was a question which he hoped and trusted at least that the Bow-street magistrates would be compelled to prove. He said, "the Executive Committee, convinced of the legality of the meeting, could not feel themselves justified in postponing it, in consequence of the advertisement from Bow-street; that they therefore should proceed to the business of the day. To effect which they recommended Citizen Thomas Stuckey, as a man on whose courage, firmness, and impartiality, they could rely with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction, to be Chairman to the meeting." He then put the motion, which was carried unanimously. Citizen Ferguson again repeated the question, whether the proclamation had been read, or whether it had been interrupted? and again received for answer, "No." Citizen Stuckey returning thanks to the meeting, said, "that from his earliest infancy he had always been impressed with the true principles of Liberty, and that his conduct had never been derogatory to the character of a man, and a member of the London Corresponding Society. He said that the Executive Committee had determined to confine the business of the day to the Petition and Remonstrance to the King, and some resolutions on the state of public affairs. That the Address to the Nation being extremely long, and containing a vast number of points, they had determined to refer it to the divisions when it would be printed."

Citizen Webbe then began to read the Petition and Remonstrance; and when he had got through about one-third, a buzzing noise was heard from the farther part of the field.

Citizen Ferguson, addressing himself to Sir Wm Addington, asked, if the proclamation had been read? To which he answered, "I do not know, that is *your* business not *mine*." Citizen Ferguson then asked the persons, surrounding the tribune, whether any of them knew if the Proclamation had been read? Several persons called out, it had not. One person said, "It had not been read in that part of the field, and we are not therefore by law bound to disperse." Ferguson replied, "We must not trust to that; there can be no use in thousands of good citizens being butchered." Several minutes elapsed in the uncertainty. A citizen who had been dispatched to Hodgson's tribune, returned, with the account that it had been read; upon which Ferguson again addressed the people, "Friends and fellow-citizens, the Proclamation has, I understand, been read. I conjure you to disperse, and to return peaceably and orderly to your respective homes."

Sir



Sir Wm. Addington expressed his approbation, and cried, "that's right sir! that's right!"

Citizen Ferguson. "It now remains to be proved whether the magistrates of Bow-street are to be the interpreters of the laws of England."

Sir Wm. Addington. "Take that fellow into custody."

Citizen Ferguson was immediately descending from the tribune, when he was seized by the legs, and received a violent blow in the eye with a constable's staff. So eager were they to seize their prize, that Townsend was tumbled into a ditch by his brother thief-takers in the scuffle. Citizen Galloway was taken at the same time. Citizen Stuckey, fearing some imprudent zeal on the part of the surrounding multitude, immediately said, "I conjure you, citizens, to depart peaceably and quietly, commit no outrage, Citizen Ferguson is a man that can defend himself; this business will come before a court of law." He was immediately ordered into custody.

Citizen Webbe, in descending from the tribune, was also laid hold of; but the constable not appearing to know positively whether he had received charge of him, the citizens withdrew him out of his hand. Citizen Webbe apprehending however, it might be deemed a rescue, insisted on returning to the constable; when, on asking him if he had received charge of him, he replied, he did not know, but if he pleased would conduct him to the magistrate to learn. Citizen Webbe desiring he would, he immediately conducted him to Sir Wm. Addington, to whom Citizen Webbe said, "have you given charge of me, sir?" and received for answer, "No."

At the second tribune Citizen Barrow read the proceedings; while he was reading them one of the magistrates made minutes, which being observed by Citizen Evans, secretary to the society, he requested that the surrounding auditors would express their approbation by raising their hands, instead of clapping, that the magistrates might hear whatever passed; and that silent mode of expressing applause was readily adopted. When the address was nearly concluded, Mr. Williams, one of the magistrates, said to Citizen Barrow, "I order you into custody, sir," upon which he immediately surrendered himself. At this period it was reported that the proclamation had been read at one of the other tribunes, when the magistrates sent an officer, and the citizens on the second tribune deputed a member to the first, to know whether the proclamation had been read; who both returned with an answer, that it had not been read. A doubt still remaining in the minds of the citizens on this



this tribune, and a conversation, between them and the magistrates, following in consequence, Mr. Williams said, "to put an end to the dispute, I will read the proclamation;" which he accordingly did, it being then twenty-five minutes past two o'clock. The citizens on the tribune requested the assembly to disperse immediately, and retire peaceably to their own habitations. Citizen Maxwell assured the surrounding multitude, that as he conceived the meeting to be perfectly legal, it would be brought before a British jury, to determine whether the magistrates had not exceeded their authority.

Citizen Hodgson opened the business, at the third tribune, by reading the requisition; and after mentioning the contradictory advertisement which had appeared in the name of the Public Office, in Bow-street, he read the letter sent by the Executive Committee to the magistrates of that office, and related that it had been sent by a deputation, who were treated with much politeness by the magistrates, but failed of obtaining any explanation, in what particular the requisition was not conformable to the laws. He concluded by expressing his confidence, that every person present must be perfectly satisfied of the legality of the meeting.

After the Chairman was appointed, Citizen Hodgson, proceeded to explain the care which the Executive Committee had taken to secure the legality of the business, as well as of the meeting, and that for this purpose they had, since the reading in the general committee, reconsidered the whole, and in consequence had determined that the Address to the Nation, from its length, and the extreme importance of the points to which it applied, could not with propriety be submitted to so large an assembly. He assured them, however, that it was by no means abandoned, but would be referred to the divisions. That the business of the day would therefore be confined to the Remonstrance to the King and some resolutions; but, continued he, I cannot pass by the intended Address to the Nation, without endeavouring to give you some idea of its contents. It contains, in my opinion, a compleat refutation, on the strongest historical evidence, of the charge of innovation as applied to the friends of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments; and the clearest demonstration that they were *practically* the Constitutional Rights of our ancestors.

But, Citizens! much as I admire the Address in its present state, as thinking it replete with constitutional instruction, I conceive in one particular it is defective; there is a something which

which I think I may call political morality wanting in it. Most of you know how anxious I am, at all times, that we should avow our sentiments in the most explicit manner; but I assure you, I am not less anxious that we should constantly exercise the most extensive toleration towards those persons who differ from us in opinion as to the necessary degree of reform, provided only that we are assured of their sincerity.

He concluded by declaring his earnest wishes that this omission might be supplied either in the revisions of the Address by the committee, or in the course of the reference to the divisions.

B. Binns then proposed that the Petition and Remonstrance to the King should be read; it was accordingly begun, but during the reading, Justice Conant began to address himself to Citizen Hodgson, but in so low a voice that he was not immediately attended to. As soon as Citizen Hodgson understood him to be a magistrate (he was on foot, and no way distinguishable from the generality of the attending company) and that he objected to the legality of the meeting, he desired the reader to stop, and resolutely pressing forward, enquired what was Mr. Conant's objection to the Remonstrance? He answered, "that he considered it to be a consequence of a general advertisement, and therefore illegal:" and on intimating his intention of reading the Proclamation for the people to disperse, Hodgson invited him to ascend the tribune, and perceiving Mr. Conant much alarmed, assured him he might depend on being treated with civility. Mr. Conant declined the offer, and when endeavouring to begin reading the Proclamation, Hodgson again addressed him, saying, "He hoped he did not mean to read it in a surreptitious manner, so as to give an opportunity of imputing illegality to the distant parts of the company." Mr. Conant appeared exceedingly hurt at this remark, and with much agitation exclaimed, "God forbid! God forbid! Nobody can be criminal for not obeying orders which they do not know to have been given."

He then directed the constables to clear a ring, which, to a small extent, being with difficulty effected; the high-constable advanced on horseback, repeating the proclamation, following Mr. Conant, who spoke in so low and faint a voice as to be scarcely audible, even by the persons immediately surrounding him.

The reading of the Proclamation concluded precisely at 20 minutes after two. A message was immediately sent by a Citizen to the other tribunes with the information; but notwithstanding,



ing, the spaciousness of the field, and the plan of the meeting, calculated to preserve a hollow centre, it began then to be so thronged, that a considerable time elapsed before the message could be communicated to the first tribune.

Mean time Mr. Conant, as soon as the proclamation was finished, addressed himself to Hodgson, saying, "In farther pursuance of my duty, as a magistrate, which is to execute the laws *as they are*, I think it necessary to order you into custody."

Hodgson assured him he might depend on his cheerfully submitting, and then addressing himself to the meeting, informed them of the business being illegally broken off, and himself a prisoner, that he now thought it necessary to mention what in the opening of the business he had not noticed, viz. That this interruption was very strongly expected, and the Executive Committee fully prepared to enter into the most ample legal investigation of the business; he therefore earnestly intreated them to disperse, and leave the cause to the care of the Committee, resting assured it was one of the most important that ever occupied the attention of a British jury. He cautioned them against the ill effects in the ensuing trials of any clamorous behaviour arising among them; but reminded them likewise, there was no occasion for dispersing with any degree of precipitation, as the law allowed them one hour for that purpose.

Mr. Conant, about this time speaking to one of the two other persons on the tribune, informed him he must be taken into custody; but it being uncertain to which he addressed himself, they both presented themselves with great alacrity, and he made choice of Binns.

Mr. Conant having observed that Hodgson's caution against precipitate retreating might produce ill effects, by inducing many to stay too long, Hodgson again addressed the assembly advising them to begin their retreat immediately, excepting only a few persons, to whom, with the consent of Mr. Conant, he gave the charge of taking down and removing the tribune.

Citizens Ferguson, Stuckey, Galloway, Barrow Hodgson, and Binns, who had all been taken into custody, were immediately conveyed to Bow-street, where they underwent an examination, and entered into recognizances to appear at the Quarter Sessions.

The General Committee, in the mean time, retired to their Committee Room, and drew up the following:

ADDRESS



**ADDRESS**  
**OF THE LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY**  
**TO THE COUNTRY.**

“ WE assure the Nation, that notwithstanding the interference of the Magistrates, and the suppression of this day’s Meeting (which proceedings we conceive to be illegal) it is our determination *still* to persevere in the same peaceable manner, while there remains any law to which we can look for protection.

“ WM. H. STATHER, *President.*

“ THOMAS EVANS, *Secretary.*

“ *Committee-Room, July 31st, 1797.*”

That the country may be in full possession of the conduct and intentions of the London Corresponding Society, this Narrative, with the Address to the Nation, Petition and Remonstrance to the King, and the Resolutions intended for the Public Meeting, are now submitted to its consideration without any alteration.

## ADDRESS

TO  
THE NATION.

## FRIENDS AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

IT is a maxim of the British Constitution, that no man can be taxed but by himself, or his representative. Yet, in opposition to this principle, the British Legislature presumed to impose taxes on America; and to support a measure so unconstitutional, your blood was shed, and your treasure exhausted. The conquest of America was universally considered as a prelude and step towards the annihilation of English Liberty. Happily the minister of that day was defeated in both his projects. The voice of the people was against him, but by his corrupt majorities in parliament, he for several years carried every proposition triumphantly.

Previous to the Revolution of 1688, the court faction carried their measures in parliament frequently by intimidation, and many members, for their independence and integrity, have been fined and imprisoned. But these arbitrary proceedings cost the First Charles his head, and the Second James his crown: William III. cautioned by the fate of his predecessors, introduced the system of corruption and secret influence, and the public money has been expended among Members of Parliament *only to betray the people.*

Many efforts have been made since the period of the Revolution to obtain a Reform of Parliament, but as they originated in the House of Commons, and not with the great body of the people, they always failed of success; thereby verifying the proverb, *that parliament will never reform itself.*

This lamentable truth, so strongly impressed on the mind, and confirmed by experience, in 1780, induced many men of the first rank, property, and intelligence in the kingdom, to form associations throughout the country, and establish a central committee in London, for the purpose of procuring a Reform. Peace was no sooner proclaimed, and the pressure of the public calamities in a small degree relieved, than these associations were neglected and finally dissolved. — Unfortunately, the men

who were foremost in promoting them, had no other object in view, than, by the means of popular opinion, to rise into power and office; and accordingly, when arrived at the summit of their ambition, they resisted that very principle, which before they had supported with such apparent zeal.

This defection, in the *great leaders* of Parliamentary Reform, convinced many friends to the liberty and happiness of their country, that nothing but an association of the people, independent of any faction, could bring about this desirable change. Accordingly, various new associations were formed about the year 1791, and among these the London Corresponding Society, hoping by a communication of sentiment, to ascertain the public will, and unite the exertions of the nation. The success was equal to the importance of the enterprise. Men generally began to see their RIGHTS, and to feel the necessity of associating to obtain them. But a profligate administration, dreading the consequences to themselves, of a people united, and determined to be free, resolved to divide them by false alarms, by calumny and misrepresentation. Those who opposed the corruption of Parliament and the Government, were charged with a design to subvert the Constitution; those who contended that an equal and universal representation of the people, in their own House of Parliament, was the only means of stemming the torrent of corruption, were stigmatized as levellers, whose only object was the equalization of property. These insidious artifices, which were intended to divide the poor and wealthy citizens, were unfortunately too successful.

But as it was impossible that this system of delusion could long continue, a new deception must be resorted to, and that was, "that there were evil-minded persons in the country, who, acting in concert with other persons in France, designed to overthrow our *happy* Constitution, and introduce a system of blood-shed and plunder." The fallacy of this base assertion would soon have been obvious, and the people indignantly have spurned the minister, who could thus dare to deceive; but taking advantage of the alarm which himself had raised, he plunged the country into a war with France, under pretence of stopping the progress of, what he termed, Jacobinical principles, though the ostensible grounds of the war were the danger of Holland being invaded by the French, the opening of the Scheld, and the decree of the French Convention, promising assistance to any people who required their aid: Notwithstanding the States General declared that they were under no apprehensions from any of the powers at war, and opening the navigation of the Scheld appeared to them to be a matter of indifference



indifference; and if the same wise policy which actuated the governments of Sweden, Denmark, and America, had influenced the British Councils, the decree of fraternization would never have been urged as a pretext for going to war. But the minister of the present day, like the minister of the American war, thought by crushing the rising liberties of France, to destroy those of Britain.

Such is the nature of Liberty, that a mind well instructed in its principles, no artifice can blind, no power subdue. The London Corresponding Society, unmoved by the persecution they had endured, both individually and collectively, still faithful to the true interests of their country, determined to persevere in obtaining a redress of its wrongs, and securing to the people the full exercise and enjoyment of their constitutional RIGHTS, by all legal means.

The minister, finding himself unable to suppress the societies by the existing laws, was resolved to persecute them with a vigour unknown to the Constitution. In order to give a colour to so violent a proceeding, a new conspiracy was fabricated; and the name of his Majesty was profaned, in making him the author of so foul a calumny against a large portion of the people, by a message to both Houses of Parliament. The consequence of which was, that the Habeas Corpus act was suspended, whereby the personal liberty of every man in the kingdom was left to the discretion of the Secretary of State and the tyranny of the old government of France, in *Lettres de Cachet*, was exercised upon a great number of Englishmen. Upwards of forty valuable Citizens, in and out of the society, with their private papers, were seized by warrants from the Secretary of State. After being detained in solitary confinement for six months, Citizens Hardy, Tooke, and Thelwall, were brought to trial on a charge of high-treason, and by the verdict of three honest and independent juries, pronounced NOT GUILTY.

Thereby stamping with the mark of falsehood, the foul aspersions which had been cast on the friends of Reform by the corrupt majority of both Houses of Parliament; and establishing to the full conviction of all the honest part of mankind, the purity of our intentions, and the legality of our proceedings.

This triumph of TRUTH and LIBERTY over the sanguinary projects of a venal administration, gave universal satisfaction to the nation. The Attorney General shrunk from the farther prosecution of the other prisoners, who were all discharged without a trial.

We

We cannot close this subject without remarking the indecency, if not the illegality, of the legislature pronouncing *positively* on the guilt of men *only* in a state of accusation; and publishing a report, artfully drawn up, calculated to prejudice the public mind against them, thereby to deprive them of a fair and impartial trial.

These measures all failing to check the progress of Liberty, new shackles must be provided. The wise provisions in the statute of treason, extorted from Edward III. by a *virtuous House of Commons*, were now set aside, and new and constructive treasons introduced. The privilege of meeting to consider and discuss public grievances, and petitioning for their redress, which is sanctioned by the Bill of Rights, was now invaded; and the penalties of *transportation* and *death* annexed to a disobedience of this new law. The violence and cruelty expressed in the features of these two bills, on their first appearing in the House, was a little altered, through the vigorous opposition they received in every part of the country; but the restrictions and penalties which they still retain, are inconsistent with the spirit of our constitution, and the disgrace of a nation that has any pretension to freedom and humanity.

#### FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

These are the steps which have been taken by a venal administration, in conjunction with a corrupt parliament, to deprive you of your liberty. But can you suppose, that those who have deprived you of your constitutional rights, will not attack your property? or rather, have they not purloined from you the former, only with the more ease to get possession of the latter? They have plunged you into an unjust and unnecessary war, by which your brethren have been slaughtered in a foreign land, while you are impoverished at home.

This trade of war, however fatal to the country, is not unprofitable to its ministers. By the great number of persons employed in prosecuting a war, the power and influence of the minister is increased. The vast increase of expenditure, while it affords opportunities of embezzlement and misapplication of the public money, beside paying those who have a claim upon the public for their services, are another source of wealth and influence to ministers and their dependents. This influence is further increased, by the loans and taxes necessary to carry on a war.

But, fellow countrymen, if the war has served to enrich the ministers, money-lenders, and a vile herd of placemen and pensioners,

sioners, what has it done for you? Let the long list of bankrupts, to be seen in every Gazette, since 1792—the decay of your commerce and manufactures, with the increased price of every necessary of life, answer; let the number of men, who from the want of employment, have been obliged to enter into the army or navy, and the labouring, tax-paying part of the community, who have been oppressed by the additional burthen of their families, answer; let the number of men, who, with their families, are reduced to the extreme of misery, while the men of middling circumstances are fast verging to the same state, answer; let all these answer, who, but ministers and their vile dependents, have profited by the war.

The whole power of the state being in the possession of the land-holders, they have secured themselves against suffering any share of the public burdens; for they have raised the value of their property, and live in an insulting style of splendor and prodigality, while the value of manufactures has decreased, and the manufacturer can hardly subsist by his labour.

Not only, fellow countrymen, is the fruit of your labour *devoured* by a *consuming* aristocracy at home, but sent out of the land to subsidize foreign despots; while the withdrawing of such enormous sums of money from the trade and commerce of the country, has produced the ruin of public credit, the stoppage of the Bank, and other consequent evils.

In the midst of all these public misfortunes, your ministers, with an unfeeling indifference, and while many of you *have not bread to eat*, bestow pensions on a vast number of foreigners, called *princes, nobles, and priests*, who invited all the powers of Europe to destroy their own country, and raised within its bowels a cruel civil war.

It has been said, that monopolizing and forestalling are the causes of the enormous price of provisions. This is certainly true in part, but they are not the only causes. However a bill was introduced to the House of Commons, for putting an end to these evils; but this was opposed by ministers, and accordingly rejected by your *nominal* representatives: so totally regardless do they appear of your welfare.

#### FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

If the wretched system of politics, pursued by the king's ministers, have brought England to such a state of degradation and poverty, how much more lamentable is the situation of Ireland? The trade and commerce of that unhappy country is utterly destroyed; its northern provinces are actually in a state  
of



of civil war; and in the capital, many of the inhabitants are dying by famine. According to the report of a Committee, appointed to distribute contributions raised for their relief, consisting of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Aldermen, and several other gentlemen and merchants, it appears, "that upwards of 20,000 individuals in that city are obliged to subsist upon five-pence farthing each per week: that at the latter end of the week many of these poor creatures are found by the visitors, who carry their weekly pittance, *living on the dregs and waste of starch, and the raspings of bread*; and that many others have not eaten any thing for the last twenty-four hours: that in many cases these poor creatures, having pledged every article, even to their blanket, have no more to cover them at night than the tattered garments they wear in the day, which are so inadequate to cover them, that many of the females are obliged to remain cowered down in a corner while the visitors are in the room." The committee further declare, "that the public are not to suppose that 20,000 is the total number of poor and unemployed manufacturers in the five manufacturing parishes: but hitherto that is the greatest number they have been enabled to relieve: many more certainly stand in need of assistance; and melancholy as it may appear, yet some of the visitors are enabled to declare, that to the best of their belief, several have fallen victims (particularly women in childbed) to the present direful situation of the times, *and actually perished through want of the common necessities of life*." The report concludes, by representing, "that should the fund for relieving the poor be discontinued, the inevitable and horrid consequences must be, that *thousands* will perish through famine, and such pestilential diseases must spread through this city, and perhaps through the kingdom; and as some remedy against this dreadful evil, the visitors propose, if enabled by the bounty of the public, and under the direction of the Committee, to provide clean straw, so as to remove the chaff and other rubbish on which they at present lie."

What is the cause of all the miseries which afflict that unhappy country? Parliamentary corruption! Englishmen! are ye willing and prepared to endure the same dreadful calamities? If not! your *only* remedy and preventative, lies in an immediate and peaceable association among yourselves, to procure a speedy reform of the representation in *your own* House of Parliament. This, if timely applied, may avert the evils which seem to hang over this ill-fated country, heal the bleeding wounds of Ireland, and prevent a further dismemberment of the Empire.

## FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

The enormity of corruption, and the degraded and miserable situation to which it has reduced this Empire, is so glaring as to convince a vast majority of the people of the necessity of reform; but a want of concurrence in the mode of attaining it, and the extent to which it should go, has paralysed every effort to obtain it. Unanimity on this occasion is certainly desirable; but till men are *agreed in principle*, how can they be *united in exertion*? The only principle on which they can possibly agree, is that in which their *interest* will be *equally consulted*, and their *rights equally secured*. This can only be obtained by UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, EQUAL REPRESENTATION, and ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS.

If the elective franchise is limited to householders only, every other man in the country must hold his liberty and property at their discretion. In other words, every man who is not a householder must be a slave, for the only distinction between a free-man and a slave, is the power which the former has over the liberty and property of the latter. Can it then be supposed, that men who are to be left in such a state of degradation, will exert themselves to bring about a change which will afford them no advantage; or rather, that they will not resist such a change? For at present the unrepresented householders make a common interest with inmates and cottagers; but if once this interest is separated, the oppression is confirmed by an accession of numbers.

Not only is *universal suffrage* essential to equal liberty, but *equal representation*: for if in one part of the country, five thousand men elect one representative, and in another part, the same right is vested in five hundred, the power of the smaller number will be equal to that of the larger, and a minority may govern a majority.

So intoxicating is power, and so predominating the influence of corruption, that universal suffrage and equal representation would not be sufficient guards to public liberty, while the representatives hold their seats for a longer period than one session, or one year. For though it should cost high to purchase a seat in parliament, this might be reimbursed with profit from the public treasury in two or three years; and even without corruption, when men have been long in power they are apt to forget from whence it is derived, and considering themselves as a distinct class, make laws for their own benefit, to the prejudice of the whole community. This can best be corrected by limiting the duration of parliaments to one year,

whereby

whereby the arbitrary and obnoxious acts of one, may be repealed by another, after as short a period as possible.

The right of the people to instruct their representatives is undisputed; but when a man can tell his constituents, as some of the members for London lately have, *that they will not obey their instructions*; how nugatory is this right? It is only by the power of compelling your representatives to obey your instructions that you can ever obtain a full advantage of *universal suffrage, equal representation, and annual parliaments*, that is, Liberty and Happiness: for without *this* power, a corrupt majority, in a parliament of one session, may do more mischief than is possible for their successors to repair.

The natural and imprescriptible right of the people to universal suffrage and annual parliaments, is founded, not only in justice and true policy, but in the ancient constitution of the country. When the Saxons established themselves on this island, they either exterminated the Britons, or drove them to a remote part of it, and governed themselves by their own laws and customs which they had brought with them from the continent. While England was divided into several small kingdoms, it appears from the history of those times, and the preambles to many of the Saxon laws now extant, that *all* the people were consulted in making them; that after the Saxon Heptarchy was formed into one kingdom, deputies were sent to the Wittena-ge-mote, or *general assembly*; that they were elected by general consent; that they were elected every session, three of which were generally held every year; that the magistrates were likewise elected by the people, and frequently appointed to be their deputies. From hence it is obvious, that not only the Saxon constitution, but every particular law, was founded in general consent, either personally or by representative.

After the battle of Hastings, when the Saxons submitted to the government of William, surnamed the Conqueror, he entered into a compact with the people to govern them according to the Saxon laws and customs, and at his coronation took the oath administered to the Saxon kings. Seven years after, he repeated his coronation oath, and swore *to observe inviolably the good old laws of the pious kings of England, his predecessors, particularly those of King Edward*. Though this unprincipled tyrant violated all his engagements, murdered the Saxon nobility, deprived the people of their arms, and introduced the most absolute despotism; yet these historical facts serve to prove that he made no legal change in the constitution, as the whole of his government was a violent usurpa-



tion. They likewise prove, that the Saxon Constitution is the true constitution of England; and how much mistaken those writers are who derive it from no earlier a period than the Norman conquest, and who also would persuade us that every privilege we enjoy is a gift from the crown.

The solicitude of the people to recover their ancient laws and customs, during the early reigns of the Norman princes, is a proof of their excellence. Many struggles were made to recover them; and when these kings have wanted a *favour from the people*, they have always conceded, or at least promised to concede, some of those laws and customs. In this manner a charter was obtained from Henry I. after his election to the throne, by which he secured it against his elder brother Robert. Stephen, to secure the throne against Matilda, confirmed the charter of Henry I. The determination of Henry II. to check the pride, insolence, and power of the clergy, gave rise to the constitutions of Clarendon. These princes, having no farther regarded their most solemn engagements than as it served present purposes, trampled on the liberties of the people; and to such an excess was the tyranny and oppression of John carried, against all orders of men, that a general confederation was formed to *compel* him, by *force of arms*, to restore their liberties: and to their honourable exertions we are indebted for MAGNA CHARTA, which is founded on the Saxon laws and customs, and though far short of the excellence and perfection of the original, will serve to shew how much public liberty had suffered from the period of the conquest.

It is not our intention to detail the repeated perjuries of the different kings, who swore to maintain inviolate the Great Charter, nor the bloody contests which our forefathers have had, to recover and preserve that portion of liberty which they have transmitted to us. Yet we cannot help observing that Magna Charta, the Treason Law of Edward III. the Bill of Rights, and those laws which seated the present family on the British throne, are all virtually annulled, by the *new* acts against treason and sedition.

Although, after the Norman conquest, the *right* of the people to universal suffrage and annual parliaments, like all their other rights, was interrupted, it was not disputed, till the eighth year of Henry VI. when an act passed, limiting the qualification of an elector to a freehold of forty shillings a year; and even the preamble to that statute acknowledges the former exercise of this right in the whole people. This is further proved from some writs, which have been found, that were issued to the Sheriffs in the preceeding reigns, wherein the whole community

munity of those counties were summoned to elect their deputies. Mr. Hume observes that Edward I. "issued writs to the Sheriffs to send to parliament two *deputies* from each borough within their county, provided with sufficient powers to consent in their name to what he and his council should require of them. *As what concerns all, should be approved of by all.*"

The early princes of the Norman line, not chusing to be subject to the controul of parliament, never assembled one, except when pressed by the want of money, or some urgent necessity, wherefore many years elapsed between the holding of one parliament and another, and many evils arose in the state. To correct these evils, and preserve the liberty of the subject, an excellent law was passed in the 36th of Edward III. which enacts, that "for the maintenance of the said articles and statutes, and redress of divers mischiefs and grievances, which daily happen, *a parliament shall be holden every year*, as another time was ordained by statute:" which statute referred to, was made in the fourth year of the same reign, which "accorded that a parliament should be holden *every year once*, and more often if need be." Sir William Blackstone supposes that the king never was "obliged by these statutes to call a new parliament *every year*, but only to permit a parliament to sit annually, for the redress of grievances, and the dispatch of business."

If the practice of those times is allowed to explain the meaning of these statutes, it is undeniable that the King was obliged to call *a new parliament every year*. For it is notorious that writs were issued to the sheriffs for *new elections* almost every year during that whole reign, and these writs, with the returns upon them, are for the most part still preserved. Out of the three years for which the writs are missing, it is certain that parliaments were holden in two of them, so that there is only one year out of many in which we cannot prove the meeting of *annual parliaments*.

During the first eighteen years of the succeeding reign, *annual* writs were issued for *new parliaments*, till Richard II. rendered himself absolute. Gurdon tells us, "the custom of proroguing parliaments was first practised by Richard II. to continue his packed parliaments."

That the power delegated by the people to their representatives continued no longer than during the session of that particular parliament to which they were summoned, is clear, as *new parliaments* were sometimes elected two, three, and even four times a year. Mr. Prynne, in his "short parliaments revived,"

vived," speaking of the representatives, says, "they presently ceased to be knights, citizens, burgesses, and barons, in any succeeding parliaments or councils, unless newly elected, and restored to serve in them by the king's *new writs*."

Should it be contended by the enemies of Reform that these frequent elections must be attended with insuperable difficulties and inconveniences, we may quote the experience of all ancient times as affording ample and sufficient proof to the contrary; "there not being (says Mr. Prynne) above two or three cases of elections questioned or complained of from the 49th of Henry III. the period of the restoration of the representative parliaments, till the 22d of Edward IV. more than two hundred years; and not so much as one double return or indenture, wherewith all the late bundles of writs are stored."\* Whereas in our own times, we have seen 58 petitions against undue elections and returns at one general election, arising from the present complicated and ridiculous right of suffrage.

#### FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

We think we have established, beyond the possibility of contradiction, the *Right of the People to UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE and ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS*. That every charge of innovation and subversion of the constitution belongs not to us, but to those who contend for the corruptions and innovations of modern times. The people were first deprived of their right to universal representation by law, in the reign of Henry VI. and afterwards more completely, during the weak and tyrannical reigns of the race of Stuart, in the creation of new boroughs. The duration of parliament was first extended, by law, to three years in the reign of William III. and afterwards to seven, in the reign of George I. If the constitution was founded in general consent, these alterations, which deprived the great body of the people of their rights, without their consent, were unconstitutional. If men chosen to serve for one year, in the House of Commons, can establish themselves for three or seven years, they can for life—the constitution of this country may be changed into an elective oligarchy, and no security remain for public liberty.

To restore the constitution to its original purity, and the people to their long lost rights, are the only objects, to which

\* It is necessary to observe that Mr. Prynne found, in the White Tower of London, among a vast quantity of other ancient records, 117 bundles of writs, with the returns, during this period.



the efforts of the London Corresponding Society have been directed. Being a part of the people, and having no prospect of any share in the future administration of the country, whatever change may take place, they cannot have any private interest to serve, their only interest is comprized in the benefit of the WHOLE.

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

It may not be improper at this time to bring to your recollection the measures which the London Corresponding Society have taken in the pursuit of their constitutional object. When, by their correspondence and public addresses, they had convinced the people, that the only means to restore this country to its former dignity and happiness, was a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament, they presented a petition to the House of Commons on the 6th of May 1793, praying such Reform. On the same day, the table of the House was covered with petitions, from almost every part of the country, some of which petitions had a greater number of signatures, than there are of persons who elect a majority in that House. Yet these were disregarded, and all Reform denied.

The London Corresponding Society, still faithful to their principles and their country, endured the storm of 1794, which assailed the life of many of their members; and on the 29th of June 1795, held a public meeting, at which they adopted an Address to the Nation, and another to the King, in which they represented how grossly he has been deceived by his ministers, to the prejudice of himself and the country, beseeched him to dismiss them from his councils, "and to exert that power with which the constitution has intrusted him—to give the people that free and equal representation, which can alone enable the British nation to prevent future and remove the present calamities."

The Address to the King being passed over in silence by his majesty, another public meeting was held on the 26th of October, when an Address to the Nation was adopted, and a Remonstrance to the King, complaining of the neglect with which the former Address had been treated, again soliciting the removal of ministers, "and a speedy PEACE, as the only means by which this country could be saved, or the attachment of the people secured."

The stagnation of trade, and a threatening famine, caused by a disastrous war, had so irritated the minds of some misguided persons, that they assaulted his majesty as he went to open the session of parliament. We deplore, with every friend to peace

and good order, this outrage upon the person of the first magistrate; but as the laws in being were sufficient to punish those who were guilty of it, we are confident that this assault was embraced *only* as a pretext for tyrannical usurpation, long before digested and agreed upon.

At this time the two bills, known by the names of the *Treason and Sedition Bills*, were introduced. As these unconstitutional bills were calculated to abridge the liberty of the subject, and stop the freedom of enquiry and association, rather than to secure the personal safety of the sovereign; the London Corresponding Society thought it their duty to step forward again, and call a public meeting, to repel the calumnies which had been cast upon them, and to join their efforts to those of the country in defeating these bills. A meeting was accordingly held on the 12th of November, at which was adopted an Address Remonstrance and Petition to the King, and a Petition to each House of Parliament, against the bills.

As these applications were all ineffectual, another public meeting was held on the 7th of December, when an Address to the Nation was adopted, and a Petition to the King, beseeching him to withhold his assent from those bills. But before the petition could be presented, they received the royal assent, and are now the law of the land.

Whatever may be our opinion of these laws, we have carefully submitted to them; and in conformity to their provisions and limitations we have called this meeting, in order to have our proceedings sanctioned by the numerous Friends of Liberty, in and about London. Persuaded that UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE and ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS are the RIGHT of the PEOPLE, we again pledge ourselves to our country, never to relinquish our CLAIMS but with our LIVES.

#### FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

When we speak of Reform, we do not mean an idle speculative alteration that will produce no real good, but such a radical change as shall deliver you from present calamities, and prevent the future. Such a change, as shall restore your liberty—put an end to this accursed war, and deprive every future administration of the power of plunging you into another, to gratify their inordinate ambition—such a change as shall lighten the public burden, by securing to you a parliament that will watch over the public treasure, instead of dividing it with a venal administration—such a reform, as if timely applied, will prevent a revolution: for if the public expence should ever exceed the abilities of the people to bear, a state to which

we

we are fast precipitating, a national bankruptcy and revolution are inevitable.

To the advocates for corruption, no time is proper for reform. In a time of war they will tell you, "it is dangerous to the state to agitate the question." In a time of peace, "that the tranquility of the country must not be disturbed by any change in the mode of representation;" but to a people who find one calamity added to another, and heaped upon them; and when they apply for redress of grievances, receive nothing but insult—to a people thus oppressed and insulted, the most proper time for reform, is that in which they feel the weight of their injuries, whether war or peace.

If, fellow countrymen, you would have this desirable reform, can you suppose that your silent wishes or solitary complaints will ever effect it? No! It is only by a communication of sentiment that the public will can be known, and by a union of exertion that *that* will can be carried into effect. You are then called upon by every obligation that is due to yourselves, to your families, to your country, and posterity; and by all the honourable exertions of your forefathers in the cause of liberty, to enter into an immediate association to recover your rights. Remember that the whole nation is no more than a society upon an extensive scale; and when the great body of the people shall be united in opinion and exertion, what small combination will be able to resist the general will?

Let not the man of fortune, and refinement, object to general association, by saying, that "he cannot mix with the poor and uninformed." He should remember that they contribute to his wealth and enjoyments, that the nation is composed of rich and poor, and that the poor are the majority\*. Neither let the poor object to general association, as that is the only way in which they can obtain those constitutional rights which are to ameliorate their condition.

Before we conclude, there is one objection to universal suffrage which we think ourselves bound to answer, viz. "That men who have no stake or property in the country, have no right to a share in the legislation." This hackneyed sophism would not merit a refutation, had it not been the means of deceiving some well intentioned individuals. To answer this objection, it is necessary to observe that *property* signifies nothing

\* It is well observed by Mr. Grattan, in his Address to his Fellow Citizens of Dublin, that the fate of the hapless American "loyalist, is a lesson to the Rich and Great, to stand by their country in all situations."



more than *that* which is a man's own. In the ordinary acceptation it is applied to lands, houses, and money in the funds; but these, in themselves, are of no value only as they furnish the means of subsistence. In this point of view trade, the mechanic arts, or any sort of labour which furnishes the means of subsistence to those who follow it, is to them *property*; and *this* property is of more value to the state than either of the former, as it is by the labour and industry of the people that the land is cultivated, houses are built, and money brought into the country. As this property, which is founded in labour, is in its nature more precarious than that of any other kind, so it ought to be more strictly guarded, for we have seen the impolitic measures of a weak administration, totally destroy some kinds of business and greatly injure others, whereby many men whose property consisted in their respective professions are ruined, and their families reduced to a workhouse; while the other kinds of property have suffered no alteration.

If the right to a share in the legislation was founded on property, it is clear, that as every man, must have a stake and property in the country, so he has a right to a share in the legislation: and the full exercise of this right, on the principles of universal suffrage, by representing all the men in the nation, must equally secure all their various interests, and afford the best and only effectual means of redressing all their *wrongs* and procuring all their *rights*.

July 31, 1797.

## TO THE KING.

THE PETITION AND REMONSTRANCE OF THE LONDON  
CORRESPONDING SOCIETY.

SIR,

FROM the disregard which our former Petitions and Remonstrances to your Majesty have experienced, wherein we have represented the extreme distress and misery under which the great body of the people languishes, by the arbitrary and oppressive measures of your ministers, we are still as heretofore, induced to suppose that those Petitions and Remonstrances have either been entirely kept from your knowledge, or deprived of their due weight with your Majesty by the machinations of those ministers.

We forbear, however, on this occasion, to renew our petition for their dismissal, conceiving it would be in some degree arrogant, and assuredly nugatory, for *this Society* so to petition, having seen that not even *the united voice of the whole country* (lately and unequivocally expressed) has been able to effect the salutary conviction on your mind, that their measures have compleatly destroyed the order, happiness, and prosperity of these kingdoms, and have consequently a hostile tendency to your person and government; that they are at length become objects of serious execration to all ranks and descriptions of persons, the baneful effects of their detestable oppression having gradually extended from the Peasant and Cottager to the Mechanic, from the Mechanic to the Tradesman, and so upwards through every class in the Community, (save only that which fattens on the public spoil, and whose splendour and luxury increase in the same proportion with the miseries of every other)—threatening in their direful career soon to involve the whole empire in one common ruin.

We trust we have sufficiently established, on a former occasion, our right, not only to petition and remonstrate, but to *demand attention* to our Petitions and Remonstrances, by then referring to that memorable event, the Revolution of 1688, which secured the enjoyment of that right; and to the accession of the House of Hanover, when that, amongst other rights, was solemnly recognized by your predecessor, and the maintaining of which was stipulated as the express and only condition on which the throne of these kingdoms could be held, or the allegiance of the people warranted.

Notwith-



Notwithstanding, therefore, the disregard our addressees to your Majesty have hitherto experienced, we yet feel it a sacred duty to ourselves and to our Fellow-Citizens, again to renew our Petitions and Remonstrances (the more urgently when the public calamities have so greatly increased as they have done, even within the two years since we last addressed your Majesty,) and to persevere therein until they shall have excited that due regard to the long and patient sufferings of a much injured people, which may *timely* interpose to prevent *those* civil convulsions, which the contemptuous neglect of JUST complaints, and the consequent despair of redress to REAL grievances, are calculated to produce.

We shall not dwell long on the accumulated miseries engendered by the present cruel and disastrous war, seeing that your Majesty has once more afforded the pleasing prospect of a termination to its horrors by the negotiation now pending. We cannot, however, refrain from declaring our detestation of its principle and conduct, by calling to your mind, that as its object has never been positively defined, and a new pretext for persevering in it has been continually adopted as the foregoing has become invalid, it is at length sufficiently obvious, that its *real* objects were no other than to crush in the bud the infant Liberties of TWENTY-SIX MILLIONS of people, just emerging from the long night of wretchedness, ignorance, and slavery, to the blissful dawn and cheering brightness of Freedom and Humanity, and to consign them and their territory, a devoted people and a plundered soil, to the surrounding Despots of Europe.

May the present negotiation be successful—may it be *intended* to be so—possessing *sincerity*, in which the former being discovered by the French Directory to be deficient, was, as might have been expected, by them abruptly terminated with marked disgust at the insult offered by the British Minister, in daring to trifle with a powerful and conquering Nation, in an affair of such infinite magnitude and importance.

We now claim your regard to certain points of the most serious import to the public welfare and happiness; to that which was the ancient constitutional right of the people of England—Universal Suffrage, Equal Representation and Annual Parliaments.

No free Constitution can consistently supersede any natural or original Right, unless to establish in its place some common and social benefit; but the substitution of that law which gives to property an exclusive voice in the grand council of the



the Nation, in place of the ancient and constitutional right of Universal Suffrage——of that which gives to heaps of stones and ruined walls the power to be represented, and denies it to the husbandman and manufacturer——of that, again, which extends the duration of Parliaments to three, and even to seven years, whereby the Representatives of the People cease to remain so, and become the corrupt agents of the Ministers of the crown, in place of the ancient constitutional right of annual Parliaments; every one of these laws compleatly inverts the above political axiom, so essential to the existence of a free Constitution, by superseding a common and social benefit, to establish in its place a partial and oppressive privilege.

Permit us to call your attention to the time of the patriot Prince Alfred, the period which Britons have been justly taught to regard as the epoch of their liberties; the period at which as much of the British Constitution as can rationally be called free may be said to have been established; the People then enjoying their rightful share in the formation of the laws by which they were governed; the only token that freedom exists in a State.

When the Heptarchy ceased, and the country became united under one Government, this Prince perceiving it would be no longer practicable to learn the will and obtain the counsel of the People from themselves in person as before, ordained, or rather restored and perfected, the plan of representation——Tythings, Hundreds, Wardmotes, and other Divisions of the Country were formed, in order that the free Suffrage of every Citizen might be unequivocally obtained, and a due proportion of Representatives to Electors strictly preserved, whereby an immediate channel was open to every one to obtain the redress of his *particular* as well as *common* grievances. The wise and wholesome laws then made were the People's *own* laws, and were duly executed by the superintendence of this virtuous Prince *in person*, not through the medium of a band of profligate Ministers.

The enjoyment of these rights was wrested from the People by the Norman Robber, William I. and though many struggles have been made and with partial success, as appears from the records of John, Henry III. and others, it has never been fully recovered, and has from the time of Edward I. gradually decayed, until it is at length become fully extinct, together with nearly every vestige of freedom the British Constitution has ever possessed.

Another

Another inroad on the British Constitution is the extended duration of Parliaments from Annual to Triennial, and, lastly, to the preposterous term of Septennial.

The due effect and virtue of popular representation, as it has been well remarked, was formerly deemed incapable, like the annual productions of nature, of being so long preserved in useful purity, without a seasonable renewal; our prudent Ancestors, imitating nature, required also an annual renewal of their Parliamentary Representation, as being necessary for the maintenance of public virtue.

We prove this annual renewal by Laws made in the 4th and 36th years of Edward III. wherein it is specified, that "for the maintenance of the said articles and Statutes, a Parliament shall be holden every year."

This law was abided by throughout the long reign of Edward III. and until the 19th of Richard II. from which time until the Triennial Act of William III. the length of Parliaments has been subject to the caprice of the reigning Tyrant.

Employ then, we conjure you, your paternal influence in procuring for the people the restoration of their Rights—Until they be restored, it is in vain that they who have an interest in the perpetuation of abuses cry out, "We have a free constitution, we want no change:" the feelings of the people give the lie to the vain boast.

A full, free, and equal representation of the People is the basis of all liberty and happiness. It is through this medium alone that the Will of the Majority can be ascertained, and no law can be just that has not the sanction of that Will.

To conclude, we trust, that this our Petition and Remonstrance will prove to your conviction, that the stability of the Throne is no less implicated in the restoration of these Rights than the Liberty and Happiness of the People.

*July 31, 1797.*

## RESOLUTIONS.

## RESOLUTIONS.

*RESOLVED,*

I. That the many and heavy calamities which have already befallen this country, and the total ruin with which it is now threatened, are to be ascribed solely to the want of a House of Commons representing all the people.

II. That by the ancient constitution of England, parliaments were elected annually, and every freeman in the state had his vote in the choice of his representative.

III. That to reinstate the people in their ancient rights of Universal Suffrage, and to restore to them the ancient custom of Annual Parliaments, are the sure, if not the only means of securing to this country, Freedom, Prosperity, and Happiness.

IV. That the London Corresponding Society, and other friends of Constitutional Liberty, here assembled, will never slacken in their efforts, until they shall have legally obtained those grand and most desirable objects.

V. That this Meeting do recommend to those numerous societies and individuals who are engaged with them in this great and common cause, Peace, Union, Firmness, and Perseverance; and their efforts must be crowned with ultimate success.

*July 31, 1797.*